

A STATEMENT BY
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BEFORE THE
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON THE STATUS AND TRAINING OF MILITARY TRANSITION TEAMS FOR
OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

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Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the House Armed Services Committee, on behalf of our Secretary, Dr. Francis Harvey, our Chief of Staff, General Pete Schoomaker, and the active and reserve component Soldiers that comprise our Army, thank you for the opportunity to report to you on the status and training of military transition teams for Iraq. Transition teams are critical to the enhancement of security force capability and professionalism, and the transfer of security responsibility to the Iraqi government. The Army has an enduring commitment to building the Iraqi national security forces while assisting with reconstruction of the country – we will stay as long as necessary, with the forces necessary, to ensure their stability. The bipartisan support of Congress has enabled us to meet the needs of current global operations and to continue to develop the capabilities and capacities required to prevail in the complex 21st Century security environment. Every day our Soldiers in transition teams and elsewhere answer the Call to Duty, serving the Nation in this time of war along with our joint and coalition partners.

To fully understand where we are today with respect to transition teams, one must remember where we began. While I will focus on the chronology of events in Iraq, it is important to highlight that we are making similar progress in Afghanistan also. In May 2003, the Iraqi Army and many other elements of the former state security forces were disbanded and Coalition forces had to begin rebuilding the Iraqi security forces (ISF) from scratch. In June, Coalition Joint Task Force -7 (CJTF-7) stood up the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team (CMATT) headquarters to organize the rebuilding effort and in September CJTF-7 tasked the Joint Special Operation Task Force to train 500 Iraqi commandos as part of the initial effort to create new Iraqi Security Forces. In

the year that followed, CMATT Headquarters continued to grow and provide increasing direction toward building the planned nine light brigades of the new Iraqi Army and rebuilding all of the institutions such as Officer/NCO candidate schools, police academies and other training facilities required to field capable security forces. Concurrently, conventional units were tasked to form the para-military Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) units, usually company-sized or smaller, to assist in providing law and order along side the Iraqi Police. However, the performance of these forces indicated that security force development would require a more deliberate effort and significantly more resources.

In June 2004, CJTF-7 now Multi-National Corps—Iraq (MNC-I) tasked the two rotational divisions, 1st Cavalry and 1st Infantry Division, to form and train two brigades of Iraqi National Guard to replace the ICDC. The conventional forces then became increasingly involved in recruiting, training and mentoring the fledgling Iraqi military and police forces with training teams they provided from within their own ranks, or “out of hide.” These conventional forces “partnered” with the ISF units they were building and eventually the US and Iraqi units began to conduct combined operations together. As the size of the ISF grew, so did the size of the force required to train and organize it. In June 2004, MNF-I established Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I), a higher headquarters to CMATT, and assigned MNSTC-I the overall responsibility for all aspects of building the ISF. By November, the total number of forces committed to ISF training had risen from the 36 original Special Forces Soldiers to over 1100 transition team members sourced predominantly from within the ranks of the units on the ground. These teams performed admirably, but the scope of the

mission and the number of forces required quickly grew beyond what the rotational units could provide using their internal and limited external resources.

In spite of these initial efforts to keep up with the growing demands, the mission required an even larger and more comprehensive effort. To meet this demand, Multi-national Force-Iraq commander, General Casey presented an expanded concept for training Iraqi Security Forces to Secretary of Defense in December 2004. This plan represented a fundamental shift toward substantially increasing the self-reliance of Iraqi security forces and recommended that the size of the Iraqi Army grow from just over three to a total of nine divisions. It also more than doubled the requirements for dedicated trainers to over 2600. Subsequent to this announcement, in February 2005, MNF-I issued a request for the 1505 additional forces required to meet this new strategy.

The Army responded quickly to the request for forces from the combatant commander and searched the ranks to find the best qualified individuals available to fill the newly forming transition teams. Meeting this sharply increased manning requirement for these leader-rich teams was a challenge for the Army. The 1505 additional Soldiers requested represented a demand of over five brigade combat teams (BCTs) worth of captains, majors and lieutenant colonels and a host of senior NCOs at a time when we already had over 20 full BCTs committed to Iraq and Afghanistan and 15 more preparing to rotate in. This obviously stressed our personnel system to meet these operational requirements as well as our other global commitments.

Further, training indigenous forces like the ISF is a core competency of our Special Operations Forces, so to expand this capability to our conventional forces, we had to design a training program, training facilities, and resource units to train the trainers.

Building this capability was not without its challenges, but the Army is a learning organization and we continued to adjust the plan as we met and overcame each new obstacle. Within approximately 100 days of the Army's receipt of the increased transition team mission, we had the first group of newly identified transition team members through their 74 day training and transition period and on the ground training Iraqi Forces—a testament to the agility and adaptability of our Army.

During the remainder of 2005, we continued to adjust our training and manning methods to meet the changing requirements placed on us by Theater through the Joint Staff. By October 2005, the Army decided to consolidate the transition team mission under one headquarters and directed Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) to develop a concept and implementation plan. FORSCOM recommended that the Army consolidate transition team training at Fort Riley, Kansas and the Army announced its new strategy to the Congress for sourcing transition teams on 28 February, 2006. On June 1st, 2006, 1st Infantry Division assumed responsibility for the training, manning, equipping, deployment, redeployment, and reintegration of organized transition teams preparing to serve in the Iraqi Theater of Operations. These moves placed a two-star commander, his entire staff, and two brigade combat teams' worth of leaders and personnel in charge of executing all efforts to man, train, and equip transition teams. This dedicated training effort led by the great professionals in 1st Infantry Division and Fort Riley, Kansas has been so successful that just last month the 1st ID began training teams for the OEF Theater of operations.

After stateside training under the 1st ID control, all transition teams travel to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility where training continues. The initial stop is at

Camp Buehring, Kuwait for in-theater orientation training. Next they fly to Camp Taji, Iraq, for instruction in the practical application of their skills through case studies and vignettes at the Phoenix Academy – the transition team “finishing school.” Following completion of the Phoenix Academy, the teams enter the final and most critical stage of their training – a 10-day overlap with the team they are to replace. This phase is commonly referred to as “RIP TOA” which stands for “relief in place, transfer of authority (RIP/TOA).” A successful RIP TOA is critical to the continuity of the relationship with Iraqi counterparts.

Once transition teams assigned to Iraq arrive in theater, they fall under the administrative control of the Iraq Assistance Group (IAG) which oversees all team training and operations. What is unique about this relationship is that while their in-country command structure indicates the teams belong to the IAG, the 1st Infantry Division’s Assistant Division Commander for Maneuver commands the IAG and provides the critical link between the transition team mission in Iraq and the training at Fort Riley. The IAG determines team assignments, oversees personnel management in areas such as replacements, evaluations, and awards processing; identifies new equipment requirements and oversees equipment accountability. This arrangement provides for better all around support to the mission, the Soldiers and the Soldier’s family than resourcing the teams solely through individual replacements.

The transition teams advise, coach, teach, and mentor Iraqi Security Forces, and provide direct access to Coalition capabilities such as air support, artillery, medical evacuation and intelligence gathering. They also help to develop capabilities of the Security Forces so they become capable of independent, effective security operations.

They also work with their counterparts to enhance the understanding of the rule of law and fundamental human rights. The teams are usually comprised of 11-15 highly qualified senior officers and noncommissioned officers with a wide range of combat and combat support specialties to include: operations, intelligence, logistics, communications, engineering and security. Teams are multi-functional by virtue of their individual fields of experience, and usually have significant combat experience. Teams are provided the tools (communications equipment), the training, and the in-country capability to ensure they are afforded the maximum security possible.

The Army only selects fully qualified officers and NCOs to fill these critical positions, based upon their grade, skill, and experience match, balanced with their individual Dwell Time. Resourcing these teams with the right Soldiers is Manning Priority #1 for the Army and we are committed to filling the Transition Team authorizations to 100% by grade and skill set. Assigning officers directly from our premier intermediate education institution to the TT mission is an example of that. The last class to graduate from Ft Leavenworth – 30 officers or 18% of that class – went directly to transition team assignments, vice unit assignments. Of the enlisted Soldiers already in TTs or on orders to team assignments, roughly half have prior deployment experience. Army Human Resources Command is coordinating with TRADOC to recognize these assignments as key developmental positions and we are working to provide incentives for transition team members. One such incentive is giving Soldiers choice of assignment upon return from their deployment, consistent with Army requirements and their professional development needs.

The Army is committed to this mission because transition teams are critical to the transfer of security responsibility to the Iraqi government. Over the past three years, the Iraqi Security Forces have been rebuilt from the ground up as a modern, effective fighting force. This success is a direct result of the initiatives taken in early 2005 and the relationships established by embedded transition teams. Here are a few facts that indicate some of the successes these teams have achieved:

- At time of 2004 transfer of sovereignty there were two regular Iraqi Army battalions – approximately 1,500 soldiers—there were no Iraqi forces that controlled their own sector.
- As of October 2006, the Iraqi Army has 10 combat divisions with total Ministry of Defense (Military) forces numbering approximately 131,000.
- The Iraqi Army now has 6 Division Headquarters, 27 Brigades and 88 Battalions in the lead, providing security for their own sectors.
- Trained and equipped Ministry of Interior (Police) forces have now passed the 180,000 mark and the total number of force-generated trained and equipped Iraqi Security Forces has reached 312,544; the goal is 325,000.

In closing, the Army remains committed to providing the best manned, trained, equipped, and led forces possible to meet the principal objective of the U.S. National Defense strategy to “strengthen alliances and partnerships”. Our Coalition and American Military Transition Teams who assist, advise, support, and train the Iraqi Security Forces are the key to achieving this objective. Consolidating all training at Fort Riley not only demonstrates our high level of commitment to the mission, but it provides standardization of training, makes more effective use of resources, and allows for faster

integration of lessons learned. ...it was absolutely the right decision. Theater feedback indicates that our approach is making a difference; teams are well prepared, dedicated to the mission, and they are clearly making a difference. I look forward to this session and answering whatever questions you may have.